

## **Architecture and urban planning: creating a new place for women**

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The presence of women in Architecture and Urban Planning schools isn't something new; Brazil had its first female graduate in architecture as early as 1908. Over time, women reached the numerical supremacy in this field. Nevertheless, being majority over their male colleagues does not prevent these professionals from having considerably lower incomes, or their works from being less prominent.

If we hope to shape our cities into more inclusive environments, which take into consideration the multiple contexts and needs of its citizens, we must listen and acknowledge all kinds of experiences. The sexism in the field not only backtracks women's careers, it also makes it harder for them to give extremely important input as knowledgeable professionals. To this day, the main voice behind planning and urban politics are those of men.

Therefore, this paper will cover analyses and conjectures about the context and the social processes that have contributed to establish the situation women architects are currently facing in Brazil, where the sheer power of numbers is not enough to prevent them from being sidelined. These analyses were grouped into three distinct categories named "myths".

These proposed axes – elaborated after reading and analyzing multiple sources – were the ones considered essential to the better understanding of the place created for women in this field of knowledge. The choice of the term "myth" to name them derives from the understanding that those are anachronistic and outdated concepts, detached of today's reality, although they still have a great impact on people's daily lives. With this in mind, their approximate time of genesis are pointed out (when possible) as well as the context of the correspondent era, leading to a process of

deconstruction that aims to encourage a reflection and, thereafter, a discussion of new standards for our professional practice.

The first one (The Myth of Domesticity) deals primarily with the question of whether in fact women are grouped into specific less prestigious areas; and how “spontaneous” could this grouping possibly be. In able to do this, we observed the construction of the public/private dichotomy versus the male/female one, a tradition that dates back to the Industrial Revolution and, despite being already outdated, remains to this day a fundamental part of the organization of society and the prevailing gender roles.

The second axis (The Myth of the “Lone Genius”) brings forward the issue of the perceived low importance of work done by women. If women are concentrated in a line of work seen as inferior, they will certainly face more difficulties in standing out through their production. However, this does not explain the existence of many men who are easily able to reach notoriety doing similar work. To get a better understanding of this situation, it was necessary to go further and seek out the roots of a behavior that makes almost impossible for women to be recognized as truly autonomous creative individuals. “Genius” is a concept understood as exclusively male; a title somewhat inaccessible to women. This way, we are conditioned to consider women's contributions not as relevant as those of men (or not relevant at all); when it proves to be impossible not acknowledge such contributions, there is a tendency to attribute them to a man, rather than the rightful woman behind them.

The third and final axis (The Myth of the “Ideal Worker”) is about the so-called women's “double burden”, its standardization and how it affects their professional practices. Through the collected data, it was shown that the historical social division of labor – where women are expected to take care of their homes and, eventually, also of some members of their extended families – isn't suited anymore for today's family configurations. The “heterosexual couple with children” model, where the man is the only financial provider and the woman is only caregiver, has given way to a myriad of other settings in which the woman often gets overloaded with multiple tasks and, frequently, the professional area of her life takes the toll.

These routes of investigation were established at the very beginning of the research work, as different layers of the answer pursued for the initial questions posed, and have changed little since then. The only approach adjustment occurred in the second axis, which in its final version tackles the concept of the “lone genius”. Initially, the focus would be on partnerships between (heterosexual) couples of professionals and the greater mediatization power of monumental buildings, and how these aspects affect the visibility of women in the profession. Both are touched only marginally in this paper due to the later understanding that these are not causes, but side effects derived from the artist’s “deification” process.

With this work’s completion, we expect to reach a better understanding of the exclusionary processes women face in the profession, causing the readers to reflect on the ingrained sexism existing in the field, and how this is limiting for all professionals involved, regardless of the gender which they may identify themselves with.

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